ESSA State Plan Stakeholders Meeting Summary

November 10, 2016/ 9:00AM – 4:00PM

Great Northern Hotel, Helena

Accountability—Assessment:

Smarter Balanced in Montana—Interim Assessments: The Smarter Balanced Assessment consists of three main components: the Summative Assessment, the Formative Assessment, and the Interim Assessment. The Formative and Interim Assessments are optional and intended to support teachers.

- Summative Assessment: the main test, the big picture.
- Formative Assessment: what is happening every day in the classroom. Educator resources to improve instruction, including access to the Digital Library, which provides instructional and professional learning resources to help educators improve teaching and learning.
- Interim Assessment: anything in between. Takes the form of tools for teachers with actionable feedback to inform their instruction. There are two types of interim assessment:
    - Interim Assessment Blocks (IAB): small sets of related concepts split into blocks for detailed (rather than comprehensive) assessment. They provide detailed information for instructional purposes. Instructors can administer blocks that align with current curriculum and use the results to help identify areas of strength and weakness for their students. Available in Math and ELA/Literacy.
    - Interim Comprehensive Assessment (ICA): Same content and form as the summative, as well as the same scaling and scoring. Gives students and teachers the opportunity to practice with the form and functionality of the Smarter Balanced system before taking the summative assessment.

Interim basics:

- Available on demand, with no further costs to schools
- No limit to number of times a student can test
- Same accessibility options as the main summative, so students can figure out what works best for them before the summative
- May be used in grade levels other than enrolled grades
- Mostly electronically scored, though Performance Task must be hand-scored locally for both IABs and ICAs.

Other new developments: the Airways Application (allows teachers to view individual student responses to each question), the Assessment Viewer Application (allows teachers to log on and view all of the items in each assessment), and training for teachers (Introduction, hand scoring, score reporting).

Assessment Vendor Contracts and Funding: OPI spends $4.71 million annually for the statewide student assessment program. The funding comes from the US Department of Education state assessments formula grant ($3.63 million), federal IDEA funds ($151,000 for the Multi-State Alternate Assessment and $242,000 for the Science CRT-Alt), and a federal GEAR UP grant ($688,000 to fund the *ACT with*

Writing, of which $24,000 goes to program management costs, and up to $85,600 for the ACT Online Prep). No state money is used for testing contracts. In FY 2017, OPI plans to spend the $3.63 million in funds from the state assessments formula grant funding in the following manner:

- $696,000 for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium;
- $1.5 million for its contract with Measured Progress for the administration of the Smarter Balanced interim and summative assessments;
- $933,000 for the contract with Measured Progress to administer the Science CRT;
- $150,000 for WIDA for the English Language Proficiency assessment;
- $353,000 for operating costs and staff positions in the Measurement and Accountability Division and IT Services Division.

At this point in time, there are no plans to change the vendors used for state assessments. OPI wants consistency with state assessments, both for the comfort of the students and teachers using the assessment and to ensure that the data the state collects using these assessments is comparable.

Accountability—School Climate and the Early Warning System: The Early Warning System (EWS) could be a potential option for the fifth accountability indicator as a measure of school climate. The EWS is a statistical model that uses data from multiple sources to identify students at risk of dropping out as early as possible before they drop out. It takes into account multiple variables, including:

Data collected by OPI:

- Moved this school year (yes or no)
- Moved from out of state (yes or no)
- Repeated a grade in k-8 (yes or no)
- Older than they should be for their grade (July 15 cutoff date),
- More than two school systems attended since 2007
- Gender.

Not collected by OPI*:

- Attendance rate,
- Number of previous term F's
- Number of previous term A's
- Number of behavior events in last 120 days
- Number of out of school suspension events in last 3 years
- On track to graduate (yes or no),
- Number of credits per year
- Number of absences in last 90 days
- Number of absences in last 60 days

With these variables, the percent chance a student will drop out of school a model is found using logistic regression. A separate model is developed for each of the grades 6, 7, and 8, and for each year of high school (not by grade, but instead by how many years a student has been in high school). Within the next year, OPI hopes to expand this system down to third grade, which would include all the schools in the assessment piece. The system measures three tiers of risk: low or no risk of dropping out (15% or less), at-risk (15%-40%), extreme risk (40% or higher). Two parts of a good EWS model: 1) the model should assign a high dropout percentage to students who end up dropping out, and a low percentage to those who eventually graduate; 2) the model should be efficient at identifying dropouts above the cut-off threshold for targeting a student as at-risk. The Early Warning System results are uploaded in GEMS Secure, which take the form of a school report, a student summary report, a student detail report, and,

eventually, an intervention report to track the effectiveness of interventions. The school-level report could be used as a school climate piece for ESSA as part of the school report cards.

*Schools store this data themselves, and for OPI to access it, they just have to give OPI access to their systems. Should not require schools to manually send additional data.

Accountability and School Climate Discussion:

Stakeholder Consensus: The fifth indicator needs to be decided before discussing how much it should be weighted for Accountability. Non-academic indicators should be weighted more heavily than they have in the past so as not to have a repeat of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The stakeholders do not want punitive measures for struggling schools put into the State Plan. While the Early Warning System is a very good system, it may require schools and districts to upload too much additional data. The EWS may also not be the best judge of school climate. The Continuous School Improvement Plans (CSIP) could work for the fifth indicator—schools already have to submit them, so it would limit the amount of new data schools would have to upload, and it could be altered to include data on school climate. The CSIP would have to be made more robust to accomplish this. Using the CSIP would also streamline the data schools have to send to the state and lessen duplication. The CSIPs are individualized to the schools and they are easily communicable to the wider community. Some stakeholders also wanted to incorporate something like the My Voice surveys into the State Plan in order to include student input. Many stakeholders also liked the possibility of leaving some flexibility in the State Plan in regards to Accountability, so that the state, in conjunction with the schools and districts, could make changes later.

Main Takeaway: The majority of stakeholders agreed that using the Continuous School Improvement Plans for school climate as the fifth indicator would be the best option.

Accountability—Support and Improvement for Schools: The ESSA State Plan must establish long-term goals and interim measures of progress for all students and each subgroup of students for academic achievement as measured by the state assessments, high school graduation rates, and increases in the percentage of English Learners making progress in achieving English language proficiency.

Goals and interim measures must be designed to enable subgroups who are behind on achievements and graduation rate to make significant progress in closing the gap (Section 1111(c)(4)(A)). The goals should be established through a data-driven process that takes into account past trends and progress for all students, including subgroups. The goals should be a statewide standard against which individual schools and districts are compared to. There will be no consequences or punitive measures if a school fails to meet the goals.

Support and Improvement Discussion:

Stakeholder Consensus: Goals for schools should be set for four years, because that is how long the law is authorized for and that will allow the state to adjust support for schools on track to fail to meet the goals at the three-year identifier mark before they fail to meet them.

Grants for schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support should not be competitive, but decided on a formula basis. Otherwise, the schools that most need the funds would be the schools least equipped to receive them.

The law states that the goals have to be specific measurable amounts of improvement, but is unclear exactly what that means in terms of specific goals. The examples with the proposed regulations to ESSA were very numerical, but it is unclear how those regulations will be interpreted or applied. If it were possible, many stakeholders would prefer less numerical goals in order to remove the shame element for schools who fail to meet them. Some stakeholders felt that using years to parity (for under-performing subgroups with the majority) could be a good measure, especially since the majority of the schools identified for comprehensive support will be either American Indian-majority and/or reservation schools. Some stakeholders would also prefer the goals to be more a benchmark a school should try to meet, but further improvement beyond that will not be measured/reported by the State Plan. This would ensure that high-performing schools will not receive poor scores on this element simply because it is hard to make significant improvements at that level. Another option would be to have different goals for different tiers/levels of improvement.

After three or four years without improvement schools identified for targeted support and schools identified for comprehensive support, should be moved into the next level of support, although the stakeholders wanted to wait to hear more about the final regulations before making a decision. Schools already in comprehensive support who fail to improve should have OPI and district teams collaborate to find better solutions and to provide further support, including technical and monetary.

The exit criteria for comprehensive support should not just be if a school has moved out of the lowest 5%, as that could simply reflect other schools doing worse than in previous years. It should also walk the line between over-supporting a school when they no longer need it and making sure that the improvement a school has made is sustainable without government support.

Important to note: Most of the schools that will be identified as the lowest performing 5% will be American-Indian majority schools. It is important to keep that in mind when designing the plan, especially in regards to culturally responsive goals and interventions. Any interventions should be locally-proven practices that take into account Montana's specific populations (Schools of Promise is a good example).